

Proposal for the 13th Docomomo International Conference
Seoul, Korea September 2014

Conflict and Expansion



Introduction

Docomomo Korea is pleased to extend our candidacy to host the 13th Docomomo International Conference in Seoul, South Korea in 2014.

The 13th Docomomo International Conference theme is “Conflict and Expansion”. The idea of modernism in Europe, the United States and Latin America is rooted in a different cultural and historical context than that of East Asia. Therefore, the theme of “Conflict and Expansion” is a commitment to introducing, defining and discovering the particular issues, criticisms and applications that are appropriate in the Asian context. Inviting the perspectives, speculations and lessons learned from the multitude of other regions with similarly diverse contexts, Docomomo Korea challenges the entire Docomomo community in this ambitious dialogue.

The conference will be held at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul and is hosted in cooperation with the Cultural Heritage Administration and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is a city well-suited to engage the current issues of Docomomo through the active practice of conservation of modern cultural heritage in the city. Docomomo Korea, in cooperation with public and private organizations, has prepared a program to attract and secure the bid for the international conference.

In addition to the 13th Docomomo International Conference in 2014, Seoul will be host to the UIA International Conference in 2017. The Docomomo Bid Committee has established a partnership with the Korean UIA Conference Committee in order to share practical information and prepare expediently for both events.

In 2010, Seoul was the host city for the G20 Summit and was also named a World Design Capital. A city with modern relevance and cultural significance, Seoul has also accumulated experience necessary for hosting an event of international scale and complexity.

Above all, in recognition of the dynamic progression and development of modernism to the present day, the members of Docomomo Korea invite you to continue that legacy with us in Seoul in 2014.

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Theme

The theme for the 13th Docomomo International Conference in Seoul in 2014 is “Conflict and Expansion”. It explores the diaspora of modernism: how it has extended and taken root in various cultures and generations as well as how there has been conflict, if any, during this process. The conference will be an important opportunity to shed light on the diverse and dynamic issues in modernism that arise through a process of conflict and expansion.

When a new ideology is embedded within a culture, or when a culture transitions into another, implicit in this process is a conflict with the existing order. New values, boundaries and self-realizations are the result. The full course of this process marks the beginning of an entirely new culture, a phenomenon of self-discovery that can only be made through expansion.

Hence, diversity emerges as Modernism is refined and redefined through such localized self discoveries. The ultimate purpose of this process will be exhumed the underlying regional issues of modernism that a global manifesto may have subtly suppressed.



Former Seo Gynecological Clinic, 1965, Kim Chung Up/SAC

Freed from the idealistic notion of a blanket modernism, the different expressions of modernism are recognized. These differentiations, in ideology, form and cultural legacy, occur both globally across different continents and regionally within the diverse nations and locales of a single continent. Furthermore, an evolution and maturation of modernism in a single locale contributes to the depth and richness of modernism in a particular time and place. Geography and chronology provide witness to an underestimated manifest diversity in modernism.

An important case study, East Asia, exemplifies the condition of local issues and conditions that differ from those that shaped modernism in Europe. In South Korea in particular, one critical conflict between the old and new era, of course, was the ever-pervasive religious clash between Christianity, Confucianism and Buddhism. Catholics from the West entered Korea but the ruling Confucian social order fiercely resisted. Following the difficulties of a religious intervention, more subversive conflict was incited through the infection of foreign colonial rule in the realms of architectural form, technology, infrastructure, education and medical care. Indeed, such instances of both overt and suppressed conflict are the vehicle through which modernism expanded in not only Korea, but Asia, and the rest of the non-Western world.

The expansion of Modernism can only be achieved through a collision with new conditions. As one site of this real-time evolution in today's dynamically changing world, Korea offers itself as both a thematic focus and as a physical forum.

It is our ambition and hope that the 13th Docomomo International Conference in 2014 becomes an occasion to invoke a critical dialogue that will elevate and advance the theme of conflict and expansion in modernism.

Sub-themes

The following sub-themes are proposed to assist in development of relevant issues to the future of Docomomo International and are subject to review by the International Specialist Committee (ISC).



French Embassy, Ambassador Residence, 1960, Kim Chung Up



Jeoldusan Martyrs' Memorial Cathedral, 1962, Lee Hee Tae

1. Theory and Education

Threading the theory of modernity through multiple cultures and modalities highlights the difference between Eastern and Western comparative philosophies and fuels new discussions in spatial, tectonic and cultural meanings. Perhaps a divestment and diversion from the current supra- architectural history is necessary to enter--and prioritize--the marginalized and regional aspects of local culture.

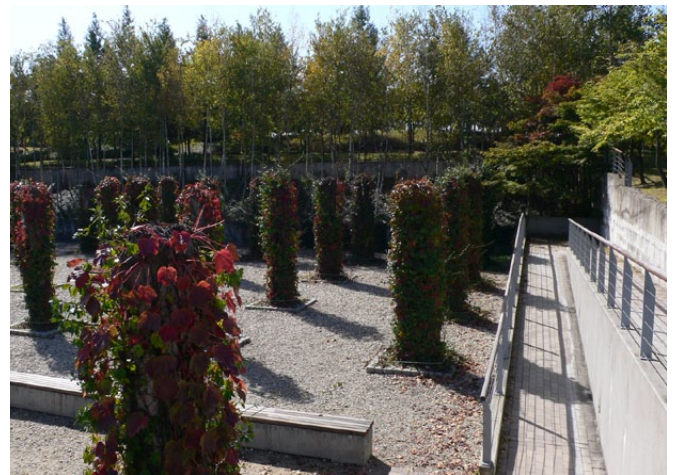
Asian theory is not recognized nor understood in an authentic and modern sense. This reflects an elemental bias and weakness in standardized architectural education. Modern movement's linearity must evolve to a lateral system that permits multiple relationships between local cultural issues and the existing universal pattern. The practical integration of this expansive architectural education should be discussed as a pedagogical structure for Asia.

2. Landscape and Urbanism

Urban planning and landscape has experienced a turbulent yet dynamic evolution in modern Asia. While Europe can stand on the palimpsest of her own past, Asia's urbanism, especially Korea's, is redefined by colonial desires and expanded with western methodologies. The comparison between these two systems reveals a complex relationship between the origins of the urban built environment and the urban life that programs the built. The former is an instrument of political and civic control, the latter, a cultural and economic tool.

As the fires of wars in the first half of the twentieth century create urban tabulae rasae all over Asia, reconstruction and planning underwent three phases. The first phase of the city's rebirth began with the basic needs of housing, education and medical facilities. The second phase continued with projects that aimed to connect: infrastructure and communication technology. These two phases were the most profound in their foreign influence, support and design. In the third and most current phase, a policy to improve the citizens' lifestyle quality sparked the embedment of cultural and civic icons within a generous policy of public space and green parks.

If these three phases define the physicality of the built environment, Asia's stacked and high paced urban programming of high density housing, shopping and entertainment promotes a social and civic behavior that defies the origins of the built. Therefore, what emerged from this hybrid of colonial and western urbanism is a non-Euclidean and non-western organism where unconventional relationships between program, infrastructure and landscape create dynamic new urban typologies.



Seonyudo Park, 2002, SeoAhn Total Landscape



Former Supreme Court Government Office, 1928

3. Conservation

The rapidly changing city is the stage for repeated collisions between societal and economic desires and historically-valued ideologies. It is with this context of conflict that the heritage of the modern movement must now expand. Unfortunately, changing social and economic demands lead to frequent instances when the value of preserving a modern building is not recognized. Policy measures, the possibility of legal action, public education and awareness programs to sustain the exchange of opinions is necessary. Here, case studies delivering success through a combination of a cosmopolitan approach, legal action and popular education will bring a new perspective.

A particular issue for dense cities with limited available land for development, the conflict between choosing conservation or redevelopment persists. Education through outreach and public awareness is the first step towards engaging a greater sector of the population in a debate that impacts our collective cultural heritage. A free exchange of ideas, experience and lessons-learned from completed and in-progress conservation projects is invited.



Former Seoul Country Club House, 1968, Na Sang Jin

4. Technology

As technology develops, the techniques and forms associated with architectural materials have also changed. Traditionally, the selection of architectural materials was associated with construction technique and process. Naturally, cultural implications and symbolism of both natural and artificial materials were also relevant in these choices.

However, early Modern technology has understandably resisted the adaptation and importation of indigenous materials and crafts into its ethos. As a consequence, embedded symbology has been dismissed as decorative arts when its *raison d'être* has specific method, material, and structural implications. However, regional groups have experimented with an inclusive and hybridized strategy where heritage and modern technology birthed a new—but controversial—regional modern identity. In an age of sustainability and regional integrity, The time has come to re-examine this inclusive strategy once again.

Technology in architecture has never been simply about a functional system. It has instigated change in philosophical values, shaped societal behavior, and championed the future. But it has also passively archived the trends of an era. Therefore while technology progresses and evolves, it has to be inclusive of alternative boundaries and limitations of the physical world, allowing for an expansion of modernism in both form and thought.



Millennium Seoul Hilton Hotel, 1983, Kimm Jong Soung



Seogang University Main Office, 1958, Kim Chung Up

5. Asian Modernism

The occasion to highlight the diversity of modernism in Asian regions is especially apt. Continental Asia is the site of some of the most rapidly changing urban modern conditions in the world today. In a world where 1 in 2 persons is of Asian descent, the non-Western internal philosophies and cultural values that existed completely and independently must be articulated and recognized before helpful progress or adaptation with the European or North American model can be attained.

The modern Asia known today has been shaped by forces shared throughout history. The coexistence of a plurality of people groups, the rise and fall of a prevailing religious majority and foreign influence by trade or colonial rule are common elements of any regional history. Yet, the marks of differentiation between the modernism of Asia from the rest of the world are plain. A discussion is needed to extract the core elements that create this Asian essence and speculate on the direction and possibilities for its advancement and position in future.



Sewoon Arcade, 1968, Kim Swoo Geun

Workshop

The graduate-level workshop will gather students from universities around the world. The challenge given to participants will be a proposal for the Sewoon Arcade by Swoo-Geun Kim, one of Seoul's most famous and controversial modernist buildings and is an important precedent for how Seoul can deal with the legacy of urban conservation in the future.

Built in the 1960's, the Sewoon Arcade was a series of four mixed-use complexes along a 1 kilometer corridor between the historic Jongno and Toegyero streets. The 13-story multi-purpose residential and commercial blocks were one of Seoul's first high-rise developments, featuring some of the city's first elevators. However, instead of becoming a symbol of Seoul's economic progress after the devastation of the Korean War, the proposal was harshly criticized for blocking development and becoming a hotspot for the sale of pornography and other seedy businesses.

In recent times, a proposal to replace the Arcade with a green corridor that would connect Jongmyo Shrine, a UNESCO Heritage site, with Namsan Mountain, the physical and symbolic heart of the city. In 2008, the first phase of the project was completed in 2008, with the rest scheduled to be finished by 2015.

The purpose of the workshop will be to evaluate the history of the Sewoon development, dissect and extract key issues and opportunities and propose a strategy of symbiosis, including conservation efforts, intelligent redevelopment and community awareness, as a legacy for the future.

Venue

The conference events will be held at recently renovated Modern Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul's premier venue for world-class art exhibitions and cultural events and also one of the city's most successful examples of historical conservation, renovation and reuse.

The museum is a modern extension and renovation of the old Kimusa Military Hospital, which was built in 1928 during Japanese occupation. Since then it was also used as the Defense Security Command building during the tumultuous early days of democracy in the nation. The occasion to preserve this history and infuse it with modern cultural relevance is celebrated and inaugurated by the 13th Docomomo International Conference in 2014 as its first major event.

Located in the heart of old Seoul, immediately adjacent to Kyungbok Royal Palace, Gwanghwamun Plaza the Cheonggyecheon Restoration project and many other urban renovation and historical conservation projects, the museum will make an excellent venue for understanding the past, present and future of the city.



Space Group Office Building, 1971, Kim Swoo Geun

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